United Nations A/C.2/64/4

General Assembly

Distr.: General
14 October 2009
English
Original: French

Sixty-fourth session

Second Committee

Agenda item 58 (b)

Groups of countries in special situations: specific actions related to the particular needs and problems of landlocked developing countries: outcome of the International Ministerial Conference of Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries and Donor Countries and International Financial and Development Institutions on Transit Transport Cooperation

Letter dated 5 October 2009 from the Permanent Representative of Mali to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to attach the text of the communiqué adopted by the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the States members of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries at their eighth annual meeting, held on 25 September 2009 in New York (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have this text circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 58 (b).

(*Signed*) Oumar **Daou**
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the letter dated 5 October 2009 from the Permanent Representative of Mali to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: English]

Communiqué of the Eighth Annual Ministerial Meeting of Landlocked Developing Countries

New York, 25 September 2009

We, the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of landlocked developing countries, having met in New York on 25 September 2009 on the sidelines of the sixty-fourth session of the General Assembly of the United Nations,

Expressing concern that landlocked developing countries continue to be marginalized from international trade, thus preventing them from reaping the benefits of globalization and using trade as an instrument for achieving their development objectives, due to their lack of territorial access to the sea, remoteness and isolation from world markets, dependence on transit services and policies of their transit neighbours coupled with inadequate transit transport infrastructure facilities and cumbersome transit and border-crossing procedures,

Recalling the Almaty Declaration and the Almaty Programme of Action: Addressing the Special Needs of Landlocked Developing Countries within a New Global Framework for Transit Transport Cooperation for Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries, adopted in Almaty, Kazakhstan, in 2003,[1]

Recalling also the United Nations Millennium Declaration, adopted on 8 September 2000,[2] in which Heads of State and Government recognized the particular needs and problems of landlocked developing countries and urged both bilateral and multilateral donors to increase financial and technical assistance to this group of countries to meet their particular development needs and to help them overcome the impediments of geography by improving their transit transport systems,

Recalling further the outcome of the 2005 World Summit,[3] in which the special needs and challenges of landlocked developing countries were reaffirmed along with reiterated commitments of the world leaders to urgently address those challenges by effectively implementing the Almaty Programme of Action,

Recalling the Declaration of the high-level meeting of the sixty-third session of the General Assembly on the midterm review of the Almaty Programme of Action,[4] which stressed that the higher cost of moving goods across borders for landlocked developing countries puts their products at a competitive disadvantage

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[1] *Report of the International Ministerial Conference of Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries and Donor Countries and International Financial and Development Institutions on Transit Transport Cooperation, Almaty, Kazakhstan, 28-31 August 2003* (A/CONF.202/3), annexes I and II.

[2] See resolution 55/2.

[3] See resolution 60/1.

[4] See resolution 63/2.

and that landlocked developing countries continue to face challenges in their efforts to establish efficient transit transport systems,

Recalling also the outcome documents of the Thematic Meeting on Transit Transport Infrastructure Development,[5] held in Ouagadougou from 18 to 20 June 2007, and of the Thematic Meeting on International Trade and Trade Facilitation,[6] held in Ulaanbaatar on 30 and 31 August 2007,

Reaffirming our commitment to urgently address the special development needs and challenges faced by the landlocked developing countries through the full, timely and effective implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action,

Recalling the Asunción Platform for the Doha Development Round,[7] adopted at the Meeting of the Ministers of Landlocked Developing Countries responsible for Trade, held in Asunción on 10 August 2005, and the Ulaanbaatar Declaration adopted at the Meeting of the Ministers of Landlocked Developing Countries Responsible for Trade, held in Ulaanbaatar on 28 and 29 August 2007,

Have adopted the following communiqué:

1. We reaffirm our unwavering commitment to the accelerated implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action through effective and genuine partnerships between landlocked and transit countries and their development partners, as well as between public and private sectors at the national, bilateral, regional and global levels, as these partnerships are essential to the timely achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, the effective implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action and full integration into the global economy.

2. We are committed to pursuing policy reforms to address the priorities of the Almaty Programme of Action and implement the specific actions contained in the Declaration on the midterm review of the Almaty Programme of Action. We are dedicated to prioritizing the development of efficient transit transport systems within our national budgets and overall development strategies.

3. We continue to attach the utmost importance to effective cooperation and collaboration with our transit neighbours, since landlocked developing countries depend on their transit facilities for access to and from the sea. We emphasize the importance of South-South cooperation, as transit transport cooperation falls squarely within its purview. In this context, regional economic groupings and transit agreements, as well as bilateral agreements, play a critical role in the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action, as they are crucial to the development of regional integrated infrastructure networks, the completion of missing links, the implementation of trade facilitation measures and the broader application of information technology.

4. We stress that broader and more effective cooperation among ourselves and between landlocked and transit developing countries is necessary to ensure a harmonized approach to the design, implementation and monitoring of trade and transport facilitation policy reforms across borders.

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[5] A/62/256 and Corr.1, annexes I and II.

[6] A/C.2/62/4, annexes I and II.

[7] A/60/308, annex.

5. We underscore the prominent role that foreign direct investment plays in accelerating development and poverty reduction through employment, the transfer of managerial and technological know-how, and non-debt creating capital flows, as well as its key role in providing infrastructure for transport, telecommunications and utilities. We call on capital-exporting countries to provide greater financial assistance and support to landlocked developing countries in their efforts to seek foreign direct investment, by adopting and implementing economic, financial and legal incentives to encourage foreign direct investment flows to landlocked developing countries.

6. We recognize that climate change poses a potentially permanent and serious threat to the economic and social development of our countries and that it can undermine our efforts towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, since we are the least prepared to face the challenges of adapting to climate change and mitigating its effects — effects that would even further aggravate the disadvantages we are already facing. We are vulnerable to the effects of climate change on agricultural production and food security and on water availability, erosion of biodiversity and human health. The full support of the international community is required through enhanced and effective financing mechanisms and technology support for projects to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and promotion of capacity-building for adaptation at the national level, as well as through critical technology transfer to the landlocked developing countries. We agree to reflect our concerns at forthcoming international forums, such as the next United Nations Climate Change Conference, to be held in Copenhagen in December 2009.

7. We continue to be deeply concerned about the series of global economic crises, which have presented major threats to the development prospects of our countries. The inherent vulnerability of landlocked developing countries has exposed our economies to severely adverse effects, transmitted through the reduction of export demand and commodity prices, trade financing difficulties, contraction in flows of investment finance, a rise in protectionism and a heightened risk of reduction in official aid flows.

8. We call for donor support through greater debt relief, grants and concessional lending to assist our Governments in mitigating the worst consequences of the global crises; protect the advances made towards the realization of the Almaty Programme objectives; and help us to avoid drastic reductions in expenditures on important public services and development projects.

9. We underscore the urgent need for additional and predictable development assistance by the international community in the form of flexible, concessional and fast-disbursing financial resources to assist landlocked developing countries facing financing gaps.

10. We call on bilateral and multilateral development partners not only to maintain current levels of official development assistance to landlocked developing countries, but to further increase commitments to assist them in the establishment of efficient transit transport systems, in the form of grants or concessional loans. Financial assistance should be given on a priority basis to the development of transit transport facilities, including the completion of missing links to connect landlocked developing countries with the regional network and the design and implementation of trade facilitation measures.

11. We request an expeditious implementation of the Aid for Trade Initiative, which should give adequate consideration to the special needs and requirements of landlocked developing countries, since it aims to help developing countries to build the supply-side capacity and trade-related infrastructure they need to effectively connect with the global economy. We attach great importance to the aid for trade agenda and are committed to enhancing our participation in the monitoring process to better articulate our trade needs and priorities for support.

12. We call on all members of the World Trade Organization to expedite the Doha Round multilateral trade negotiations and reach a successful, development-supportive conclusion that ensures, inter alia, improved market access for agricultural and industrial export products of landlocked developing countries.

13. We reiterate our call to members of the World Trade Organization to facilitate the accession of landlocked developing countries to the World Trade Organization and to take into account their special problems and needs resulting from their geographical disadvantages. Targeted technical assistance should be provided to acceding landlocked developing countries during all stages of the process.

14. We emphasize the crucial importance of the World Trade Organization trade facilitation negotiations and commit to further strengthening our concerted efforts in this context, to ensure better conditions for transit trade. We reiterate our expectation for a final outcome that contains globally binding commitments to ensure freedom of transit in order to expedite the cross-border movement of goods. The United Nations and other relevant international organizations should provide greater support to strengthen the negotiating capacities of landlocked developing countries and their ability to implement trade facilitation measures.

15. We welcome the establishment in Ulaanbaatar of an international think tank for landlocked developing countries to enhance the analytical capability of landlocked developing countries; provide home-grown research that caters to our specific needs; and maximize our coordinated efforts for the full and effective implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action and the Millennium Development Goals. We pledge full support for the operationalization and realization of the mandate of the think tank. We further express our gratitude to the Government of Mongolia for taking on this noble task and for its leadership throughout the years in matters pertaining to landlocked countries. We call upon international organizations and donor countries to assist us in achieving the objectives of the international think tank.

16. We reaffirm our full and firm commitment to pursue a collective and constructive course of action at the United Nations and other relevant forums for the promotion and protection of our common interests. We emphasize that the needs and special problems of landlocked developing countries should be adequately addressed at the relevant upcoming global forums, including the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries and the reviews of major United Nations conferences and of the Millennium Development Goals in 2010. In this context, we seek to further strengthen the work of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries and decide to adopt the rules of procedure agreed by all Ministers.

17. We request the Office of the High Representative for Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States to continue to mobilize and coordinate international support and resources for the effective implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action and the Declaration on the midterm review, in accordance with its mandate. We welcome the Matrix adopted by the Fifth Inter-agency Consultative Meeting on the Almaty Programme Implementation as an important step towards better-coordinated and coherent technical assistance programmes in transit transport and trade facilitation. It should be further pursued.

18. We also request the Secretary-General to undertake the necessary measures to provide additional resources to the Office of the High Representative for Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States to enable it to effectively carry out its additional mandate given by the General Assembly for ensuring the full and effective implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action.